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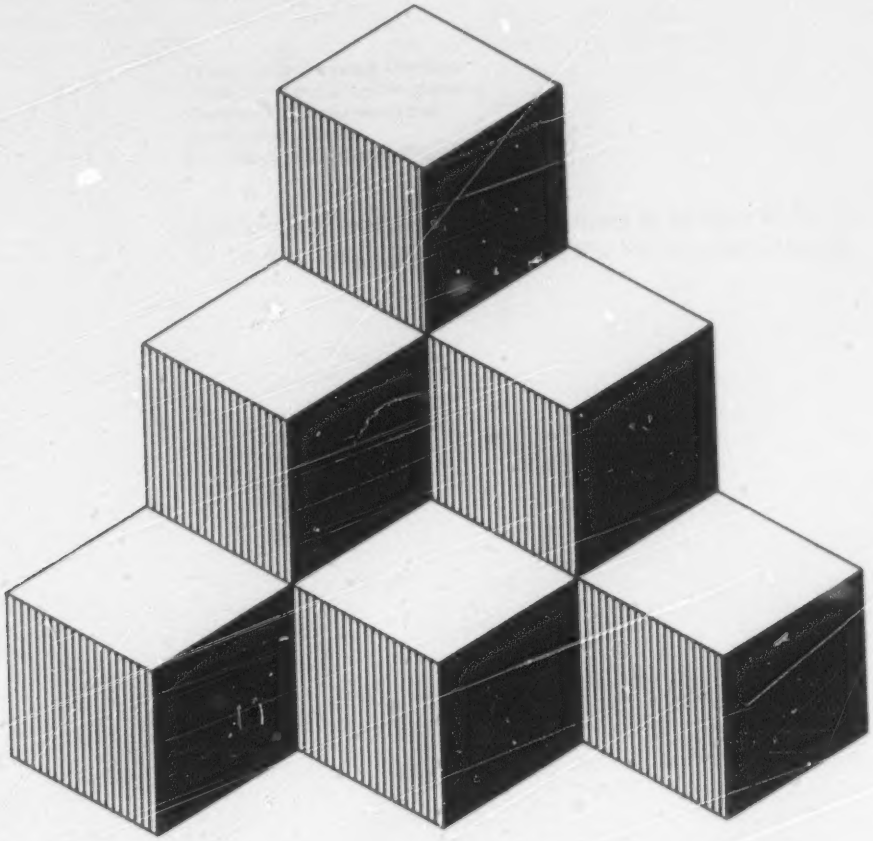
Identifying Sources of Organizational Conflict



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Identifying Sources of Organizational Conflict

John R. Turney
August 1981

Productivity Research Division
Office of Productivity Programs
Workforce Effectiveness and
Development Group
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Staff involved in the conduct of this study in addition to Dr. Turney included Dr. Stanley Cohen, Dr. Vito Stellato, and Ms. Patricia Scandrett.

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Executive Summary

Conflict in organizations comes in many different forms, ranging from simple differences of opinion to physical harassment. In a positive form, conflict can motivate employees to greater productivity through competition with other employees; in negative forms, it can take an employee's time and attention away from work, thus reducing productivity. The form that conflict takes depends greatly on the viewpoint of the individual: what some employees see as healthy competition may be viewed by others as interference or threat.

If managers are to maximize the productivity of their organizations, they must be able to establish the nature of conflict as it exists in their organizations. They can then target appropriate actions to reinforce positive conflict and reduce negative conflict. This paper describes a process used successfully in one Federal agency to examine conflict and cooperation. This description, complete with examples of the process in action, can be used by managers in other Federal agencies to help them decide if the process would be useful and appropriate to their organizations.

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Introduction

It goes without saying that conflict is inherent in every organization. However, the forms which it takes and the impact it has can vary considerably from one organization to another as well as from one part of the same organization to another. This diversity in conflict perspectives is natural given what the term "conflict" represents. It is simply a convenient label attached to certain interpersonal activities or events by employees who have observed or experienced them. Therefore, persons may choose to call different situations "conflict" as a function of their own frames of reference and experiences. Likewise, they may attach different importance to various conflict forms as a function of these experiences. For example, as Kilman and Thomas[1] have pointed out elsewhere, conflict can take such forms as deliberate interference with someone's goal achievement, reactions to threats, emotional hostility, and differences of opinion.

The differences in the ways conflict is viewed have a number of important implications for addressing conflict in any organization. First of all, the mechanisms which the organization has established may not be adequately geared to deal with particular types of conflict which are occurring in certain segments of the organization. For example, management training in conflict resolution techniques designed to address differences of opinion may not be appropriate for physical harassment. Secondly, policy-makers and resource allocators in the organization may have different ideas about what needs to be done to resolve conflict as a function of their own perspectives as to what conflict is all about. For example, some may view conflict as competition while others view conflict as harassment. Thirdly, supervisors may attempt to impose the same resolution strategy on every conflict which they have with subordinates even though different strategies may be more appropriate for certain types of conflict. Finally, employees may push for reform in how their organization deals with conflict on the basis of one conflict type when they could expand their advocacy group by incorporating different forms of conflict in their platform. For example, combining physical harassment as a conflict issue with career discrimination could bring together two groups which previously had pushed for reform in only one of these conflict areas and strengthen both groups.

The Impact of Conflict

Conflict can have a number of possible impacts on an organization. In a more positive form, it can motivate an employee to higher levels of productivity through competition with other workers. In its negative forms, it can take an employee's time and attention away from the work itself thereby reducing productivity. For example, in one government organization which we studied, 57% of the employees surveyed stated that conflict interfered with getting their work done. In this same organization, 45% of employees experiencing high conflict indicated that they would look for a new job during the next year.

It is impossible to eliminate negative forms of conflict completely from any organization. Personality clashes and disagreements will always occur. However, it is possible to reduce conflict. Such efforts can be facilitated by use of a process which helps to determine the diverse forms of conflict in existence in a specific organization. The intent here is to describe one such process. This process can be used not only to establish the nature of conflict forms but also to look at their frequency of occurrence among different employee groups and within various units of an organization. Cooperation as well as conflict can be studied using the process.

[1] Kilman, R.H. and Thomas, K.W. "Four perspectives on conflict management: An attributional framework for organizing descriptive and normative theory." *Academy of Management Review*, January, 1980, 59-67.

Steps in the Conflict Resolution Process

The steps included in the process for determining the forms of organizational conflict and cooperation are outlined in Table 1. These are not necessarily the only steps possible and they may require certain modifications to meet the specific requirements of your own organization. However, we have found that they worked effectively to determine the nature of conflict and cooperation in one 14,000 employee Federal installation, the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We will draw upon this organization for examples as we describe the process. The important point to keep in mind is that regardless of the final format the process assumes in a particular work-setting, it needs to be able to tap the full diversity of conflict in existence.

Table 1 Steps in the Conflict Resolution Process

1. Establish an internal workgroup.
2. Define conflict issues.
3. Develop data collection instruments.
4. Collect and analyze data.
5. Report on findings.
6. Establish action plans to address major conflict areas.
7. Implement action plans through key influential persons/groups.
8. Evaluate impact of action plans; revise and fine tune actions.

Step 1 — Establish an internal workgroup — This group needs to have a clearly defined role which establishes its responsibilities and influence. For example, if it is to be an advisory group to a manager or executive, then this fact should be clearly indicated for it suggests certain group strategies such as developing a range of alternatives for the decision-maker to choose among in setting up conflict resolution mechanisms. In addition, the group needs to establish an internal decision-making process. For example, will the group require a two-thirds majority to commit itself to a decision? How will tie votes be treated? Will there be a group leader and how will that person function? The NIH working groups each had a trained process facilitator who was not a formal group member but helped to address such concerns.

The composition of the working group is also an issue which needs to be considered carefully. NIH followed the strategy of forming a small, four-member task force with primary responsibility for developing recommendations for action plans for the NIH Director and a second larger 16-member review panel representing different segments of the NIH community. It is important to have the involvement and support of various groups which are to be included in the conflict resolution process to assure their commitment to and ownership of the project. This can be facilitated by having representatives from these groups serve as members of the working group. However, if this group becomes too large, it is likely to be inefficient as a day-to-day process guidance mechanism. This is one reason why NIH formed two separate groups.

It is also important to consider the eventual role of the working group in the implementation of conflict resolution action plans. If it is to be responsible for actual implementation efforts, then it should include persons in key positions of power and influence in the group. This also helps to reinforce top management support for the project. Another strategy, as followed at NIH, is to appoint different persons to implement action plans once the recommendations are made by the working groups. In this case, it is still necessary to clearly associate key persons in the organization with the project so that employees will take it seriously. At NIH, the Director publicly assumed final responsibility for acting upon project results.

Step 2 — Define conflict issues — Once the working group has been formed, it must be certain that the conflict issues which are to be addressed are clear to its members. Given the different conflict definitions and perspectives which employees in any one organization are likey to have, it is important to determine how the group members view conflict and what they expect to accomplish through the conflict resolution process. This involves having each group member define conflict and indicate the major conflict issues which he or she feels should be addressed. Then a decision must be reached as to which of these issues will be addressed during the conflict resolution process. This process helps to limit the focus of the project to a feasible set of objectives and to establish realistic expectations on the part of group members.

It is also important to define the target groups from which data are to be collected. For example, in the NIH study, race defined as white or minority, sex, and job category were used. The job categories were scientific and health professional staff; lab and patient care support

staff; administrative, secretarial, and clerical staff; and crafts, plant operations, and maintenance staff. Some other group breakouts which might be considered are organizational divisions, supervisor-subordinate level, age, pay grade, educational level, and geographic location. However, it should be remembered in making decisions on target groups that each break-out adds to the complexity of the data analyses and the resources required to conduct them.

Moreover, as part of this discussion, it is helpful to consider the positive side of the coin as well. An examination of cooperation, its forms, and the strategies used to maintain cooperative work relationships can provide a focus on ways to minimize or prevent conflict in the first place. An emphasis on cooperation also serves to provide a positive perspective to the conflict resolution process by emphasizing that many employees in the organization are currently practicing effective conflict avoidance techniques.

Step 3 — Develop data collection instruments — The next step is to develop measures which tap the nature and extensiveness of conflict and cooperation throughout the organization. The process which was followed at NIH included the construction of a semi-structured interview guide in Appendix A. This guide was used to collect information on the nature of conflict and cooperation as perceived by a sample of 234 NIH employees. Each interview lasted approximately 1/2-hour with an additional 1/2-hour required for writing up the interview data. The type of information obtained from the NIH interviews included how employees personally defined conflict and cooperation. The six most frequently occurring definitions are listed in Table 2. These definitions were included in the survey developed as the next step in the process. There, they were used to determine the percentage of employees selecting each definition as best representing how they personally viewed conflict and cooperation from a representative sample of 1,167 NIH employees. As the data show, an equal percentage of approximately 25% of the employees selected one of three definitions. They include hindering goal achievement, a breakdown in communications, and a disagreement or difference of opinion. On the other hand, there was much more agreement among employees in their preferred definition of cooperation with 62% selecting helping one another to achieve goals or objectives.

Various conflict and cooperation causes, forms, and outcomes which were identified through the interviews were built into the survey in order to measure their frequency of occurrence and extensiveness throughout different race, sex, and job categories at NIH. The survey topics include conflict impact, definitions of conflict and cooperation, contributors to conflict and cooperation, conflict behaviors, race and sex discrimination, conflict outcomes, supervisory conflict resolution, supervisory discrimination, conflict resolution mechanisms, and use of discussions to resolve conflict. This material can be supplemented by other items describing unique aspects of the specific organization under study. General job satisfaction scales can also be added which have normative data for comparisons between employees in one organization and employees in the total Federal sector. Such scales have been developed into a diagnostic survey entitled the Survey of Organizational Climate which is described elsewhere by Siegel and Turney.[2]

It should be emphasized that, while these data collection procedures were followed at NIH, other alternatives may be more appropriate in another organization. For example, it may be sufficient to interview a sample of employees using an interview guide if the total population of target employees in the conflict resolution process is under 100. Or it may be possible to develop a survey without first interviewing employees if the working group feels that conflict issues are already clearly defined.

In addition, you need to maintain careful coordination between the persons conducting the study and the working group during Step 3. This entails providing working group members with interview and survey material for review prior to their use for data collection purposes. This enables the members to assure that the conflict issues which they defined during Step 2 are adequately covered. Frequent coordination also helps to reinforce commitment to and ownership of the study by working group members. This is important for their later, more intensive participation in the development of action plans. At NIH, the draft interview guide and survey were both reviewed by task force and review panel members.

Step 4 — Collect and analyze data — The instrumemts are administered to selected employees in the organization. At NIH, a random sample of 10% of the total population was given the survey. In organizations of under 1,000 employees, it is usually possible to administer a written survey to everyone. Once the data are collected, the data analyses take place.

There are a variety of ways to focus in on the diversity of conflict which is reflected in survey data from an organization. A sample of these focuses taken from the NIH data are provided below:

1. **High conflict respondents** — It is possible to break out those persons from the total survey sample who indicated that they personally experienced high work conflict. At NIH, it was found that this group preferred one

[2] Siegel, A.L. and Turney, J.R. "Managers' Guide to Using the Survey of Organizational Climate." U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Effectiveness and Development Group, Productivity Research Division, 1981.

Table 2 CONFLICT and COOPERATION Defined

	% EMPLOYEES AGREEING:
CONFLICT IS...	
1. PERSONS OR GROUPS HINDERING ONE ANOTHER FROM ACHIEVING GOALS OR OBJECTIVES.	27%
2. A DISAGREEMENT OR DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	26%
3. A BREAK-DOWN IN OR ABSENCE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	22%
4. A DISAGREEMENT IN WAYS OF GETTING THINGS DONE BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	9%
5. UNEQUAL TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT PERSONS OR GROUPS.	9%
6. COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES, RECOGNITION, ETC., BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	6%
COOPERATION IS...	
1. PERSONS OR GROUPS HELPING ONE ANOTHER TO ACHIEVE GOALS OR OBJECTIVES.	62%
2. SHARING OF RESOURCES, RECOGNITION, ETC., BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	12%
3. OPEN, CANDID COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	9%
4. AN AGREEMENT IN WAYS OF GETTING THINGS DONE BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	9%
5. AN AGREEMENT OR SAME OPINION BETWEEN PERSONS OR GROUPS.	4%
6. EQUAL TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT PERSONS OR GROUPS.	4%

of the *least* popular conflict definitions, unequal treatment of different persons or groups. This finding is significant since it indicates that conflict may represent a different issue to those employees who experienced it most severely as compared with other employees. This group also gave the lowest ratings to supervisory competence, supervisor attempts to resolve conflict, supervisor task orientation, work group cooperation, and the relationship between performance quality and work rewards.

ii. Conflict diversity between groups — Another way to look at the data is to compare various group break-outs. For example, as we indicated earlier, race, sex, and job category were used in this study to separate employees at NIH into different groups. These groups were then compared to determine the extent to which there were differences in the causes and forms of conflict which existed. Looking first at the four job categories which were used, there were numerous differences in primary conflict issues among the groups. For example, substantial percentages of scientific and health professional staff noted withholding support or information and inadequate interstaff communications as sources of conflict. Lab and patient care support staff included training requested but not received and promotions unrelated to performance

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as top causes of conflict. Administrative, secretarial, and clerical staff focused on unrelated performance and promotions as well as no chance for promotion in current job series and an inability to transfer from one job series to another. For crafts and trades, plant operations, and maintenance staff, harassment in all of its forms and supervisory favoritism and race discrimination were the major conflict issues. (The complete list of conflict issues included in one or more job categories is provided in Appendix C.)

In a separate data examination,[3] we looked at a number of conflict behaviors as determinants of work-setting conflict level of each of the four job categories. The behaviors covered and the statistical analyses conducted are provided in Appendix D. Using step-wise regression procedures, we found different sets of behaviors predicting conflict level for each job category. For scientific and health professional staff, withholding support was the best predictor of work-setting conflict level; for the lab and patient support staff, hindering advancement proved to be the best predictor; for administrative, secretarial and clerical staff, the best predictor was insulting or making demeaning comments; and for crafts and trades, plant operations, and maintenance staff, it was hindering attempts to use grievance, appeals, or EEO procedures.

Another way to group employees is by race and sex. The concern about conflict issues in general at NIH was more prevalent among minority males and females and white females than among white males. The conflict issue cutting across all three of these groups is unequal treatment. Sixty-five percent of minority females, 59% of minority males, and 54% of white females felt that unequal treatment contributed to conflict in their work-settings compared with 40% of white males. However, there were also differences in conflict issues among these first three groups. For example, minority males were most aware of physical harassment. Minority females had the most problem with coworker relationships. White females felt most locked into job series with no promotion potential. Moreover, minority females in the crafts and trades, plant operations, and maintenance job category suffered most from sexual harassment and supervisory discrimination.

iii. Features of the work-setting — Another way to look at the diversity of conflict in an organization is to consider the major features of the work-setting as they are related to conflict. Table 3 presents the organizational and interpersonal factors which were included in the NIH study and the percentages of employees indicating that each one contributed a substantial extent to conflict in their work-setting. It is not surprising that communications ranks first as a source of conflict due to its interpersonal nature. What is interesting is that coworkers are perceived as a more significant cause of conflict than supervisors. Our usual focus tends to be on conflict between supervisors and subordinates as represented in supervisory training and formal conflict resolution mechanisms like the grievance process. However, here the data suggest that conflict between coworkers is an equal if not greater problem. This finding is reinforced by other data as well. Seventy-two percent of the respondents had observed or experienced coworker harassment compared with 53% who had observed or experienced

Table 3 Contributions of Organizational and Interpersonal Factors to CONFLICT in Work-Setting

RANK	FACTOR	PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES INDICATING CONTRIBUTION OF SOME OR GREAT EXTENT TO CONFLICT
1.	Way persons communicate or share information	62%
2.	Way employees perform their jobs	57%
3.	Unequal treatment of employees by other employees or supervisor	53%
4.	Co-workers	51%
5.	Personal growth and advancement issues	51%
6.	Resource allocation issues	45%
7.	Supervision	44%
8.	NIH rules and regulations	43%
9.	Physical work environment	41%
10.	Training issues	32%

[3] For a more detailed description of these analyses, see Turney, J.R. and Cohen, S.L., "Determining what conflict is in a diversely populated research bureaucracy." *Proceedings*, Academy of Management, Annual Convention, 1980.

supervisor harassment. Moreover, such group dimensions as negative attitudes within the workgroup, quality of intergroup relations, and group cohesiveness were more related to work-setting conflict level than supervisor dimensions addressing competence and communications effectiveness.[4]

Iv. Feeding data back to employees — The three ways to examine the diversity of conflict which are described above can be supplemented by data feedback sessions conducted with employees. At these sessions, representative examples of the actual survey data are presented to groups of employees and they are asked for their interpretations or explanations of what the data signify. These sessions provide a final validity check and clarification of the findings prior to the completion of the analysis phase. At NIH, the diversity of employee conflict perspectives was reinforced in these sessions. As we went from one employee group representing a particular segment of the NIH community to another, we found that we had to shift our focus continuously in order to provide each group with data which its members could relate to their own conflict perspectives. On many occasions, we noted that employees were struggling to deal with the fact that perspectives other than their own existed within the NIH community.

Step 5 — Report on findings — The data analyses are followed by some form of report on the findings. At NIH, we submitted a written report to the internal work groups responsible for developing action plans. This report included a presentation of the survey findings and a number of recommendations for the work groups to consider. These recommendations were based upon examinations of current conflict resolution mechanisms in existence at NIH and a consideration of their weaknesses.

All of these mechanisms were found to have limitations in resolving conflict. The survey findings indicated that only 20% of NIH employees made use of one or more of them. However, 57% of the employees indicated that conflict sometimes or often interfered with getting their work done. Moreover, among the users, substantial percentages felt that the mechanism they used increased rather than reduced conflict with the exception of the employee assistance program. These figures are presented in Table 4.

The formal mechanisms varied in the extent to which they were perceived as being useful by different NIH employee groups. For example, 35% of the minority males and 42% of the minority females felt that they had benefitted to some extent from the existence of the EEO program compared with 15% of the white males and 16% of the white females. The white female percentage is interesting since this group indicated the presence of discrimination to an extent similar to the minority groups. Yet its members found the formal mechanism designed to address discrimination to be less useful.

Much conflict resolution that occurs in organizations never reaches a formal mechanism. Frequently, a neutral third party helps to resolve the conflict. Thirty-five percent of the NIH employees indicated that they have used a trained neutral third party to resolve conflict on some occasion. Moreover, 48% of the employees agreed that there was a need for training neutral third parties at NIH to help resolve conflict.

Individuals experiencing conflict may find it useful to discuss it in a setting outside of work to reduce the likelihood of interruptions and to estaslish a neutral atmosphere in which to address the conflict. For employees

Table 4 Impact of Formal Mechanisms on CONFLICT as Perceived by Users

MECHANISM	REDUCES CONFLICT	NO IMPACT	INCREASES CONFLICT
EEO Discrimination Complaints Process	27%	19%	54%
Grievance Process	18%	15%	68%
Personnel Guidance and Counseling	44%	31%	26%
Employee Assistance Program	68%	29%	3%

[4] These relationships were determined through step-wise regressions where various survey work-setting factors were entered as predictors against work-setting conflict level as the dependent variable.

who personally had work conflicts at NIH, 43% indicated that they had resolved a conflict through discussions held outside of their work-setting. Finally, one way in which employees can improve their skills in handling their own conflict or acting as a neutral third party for other persons' conflicts is through training. At NIH, 31% of the employees had received training which they said had helped them to resolve conflict more effectively.

The recommendations in the study report to NIH which drew upon this information included establishing a conflict resolution board to assure coordination among formal resolution mechanisms, developing a counseling skills program for counselors in all resolution mechanisms, and expanding and improving EEO discrimination and grievance process services so they are more responsive to users in all employee groups. In addition, we recommended that supervisors be given training in cooperation maintenance and conflict resolution strategies to deal with the specific types of conflicts they are most likely to encounter. Moreover, the establishment of an interdepartmental mobility coordinator was recommended who would facilitate the transfer of employees in dead-end jobs or experiencing other forms of irresolvable conflict.

Step 6 — Establish action plans — With the submission of the report, the workload shifts substantially to internal groups. They must take the information generated during Steps 4 and 5 and develop a set of action plans to address the conflict problem areas uncovered. There are several points for the group members to keep in mind as they engage in this process. First of all, the action plans need to be clearly based on the data. Otherwise, it will be difficult to gain sufficient organizational support and resources to carry them out because of the diversity of conflict perspectives in the organization. Persons in key positions of influence with different perspectives may disagree with action recommendations which do not correspond with their views of critical causes and forms of conflict. However, recommendations based on sound data can help to convince them of the appropriateness of a given action plan.

Secondly, action plans must be as realistic as possible given the work groups' knowledge of the organization and its resources. For example, if a proposal is made to staff a new office to resolve certain types of conflict, then there must either be a sense that current resources are available for such an action or other actions need to be developed as alternatives. Otherwise, an important conflict area supported by the data may not be addressed because the action proposed is impractical.

Entering into the discussion of realistic action plans is a consideration of the person or persons who will ultimately decide what actions to take and the types of actions they are likely to be receptive to. This determination must be based on the previous experiences with or observations of these persons by members of the work groups.

Finally, the work groups must decide what role, if any, they wish to play in the implementation process. This role may already have been determined as part of Step 1. However, even if no active involvement in the implementation process was laid out at that time, it is still possible that the groups may have roles as overseers and evaluators of the implemented action plans.

Step 7 — Implement action plans — Carrying out the action plans requires high level organizational support and commitment. Individuals or groups with clear responsibilities for taking specific actions must be designated by top management. Criteria for selecting these employees include formal organizational power, control of critical staff or monetary resources, credibility with the groups most likely to be affected by the action plan, and a reputation for getting things done. It also helps to have a clear idea of what is supposed to be accomplished through each action plan and the potential barriers or roadblocks.

Step 8 — Evaluate action plans — The evaluation of the impact of action plans involves determining whether they have resulted in the reduction of targeted forms of conflict. The interview or survey instruments originally used to define and document the occurrence of conflict and cooperation can also be used to evaluate the impact of action plans. These instruments can be readministered and the data compared with the original data on the specific conflict targets which an action plan was designed to address.

Evaluations do not have to await the completion of actions. It is possible to evaluate progress during the implementation in order to revise or fine tune an action plan. It is important that evaluators maintain a proper perspective as to the objectives of the actions in addressing targeted conflicts. Frequently, the action plan process becomes an end in itself and its original purpose is lost sight of.

The eight steps which we have just outlined are intended to provide some guidelines for conducting a systematic, data based conflict resolution process. Research must be conducted in a broad range of Federal organizations to further delineate the critical elements in this process leading to more effective conflict resolution strategies. Until this is done, the exact form which the process takes will vary from one organization to the next. However, whatever final shape it assumes, the process needs to reflect the diversity of conflict in existence in the organization. As we have shown here, this diversity is integral to conflict and the conflict resolution process.

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APPENDIX A
NIH INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Demographics:

   a. Job type

   _____Scientific and health professional staff
   _____Lab and patient care support staff
   _____Admin., secretarial, and clerical staff
   _____Crafts and trade, and maintenance staff

   b. Level

   _____Supervisor
   _____Nonsupervisor

   c. Years of service at NIH _____

   d. Job status

   _____Part-time
   _____Full-time Permanent
   _____Full-time Temporary

   e. Race _____

   f. Sex _____ M _____ F

2. What distinguishes cooperation from conflict for you?

   or

   What is conflict and what is cooperation as far as you are concerned?

3. Think of a conflict you have had at NIH which you feel was *not* resolved effectively.
   a. Describe the way it developed or what caused it. What form did it take in your day-to-day work activities? (e.g., harrassment, no communication, poor assignments, etc.)
   b. Why do you feel that this conflict was not effectively resolved?
   c. In retrospect, are there any steps which you feel you or someone else should have taken to reduce the conflict?

4. Think of a conflict you have had at NIH which you feel was resolved effectively.
   a. Describe the way it developed or what caused it. What form did the conflict take in your day-to-day work activities?
   b. Why do you feel that this conflict was resolved effectively? What steps did you or someone else take to resolve it?

5. Think of supervisors or coworkers you have known at NIH who have dealt effectively with conflict. In general, what made them successful? (techniques, approaches, etc.)

   or

   What has your experience shown you works effectively in dealing with conflict?

6. Think of supervisors or coworkers you have known at NIH who have dealt ineffectively with conflict. What made them unsuccessful?

7. What do you want most out of your work and how do current levels of cooperation and conflict affect these goals? (i.e., do they help, hinder, or is there no relationship?)

8. Are all persons in your work group dealt with similarly by supervisors and coworkers? If not, what job aspects are involved or what are the differences?

9. What current conflict resolution mechanisms at NIH do you know about?
   _____ Grievance procedures
   _____ EEO complaints
   _____ Employee assistance program
   _____ Counseling
   a. How did you learn about these mechanisms? Do you feel that adequate information was provided?
   b. Have you had actual experience with any of these conflict resolution mechanisms? (If yes) Which one(s) and did they function as you had expected?

10. Do you know of someone who has had experience with any conflict resolution mechanisms. (If yes) Which one(s) and what was his/her experience?

11. Would you use any conflict resolution mechanism now in existence in the future? (If no) Why not?

12. What changes or additions within NIH, if any, would you like to see introduced as forms of conflict resolution mechanisms?

13. Are there conflicts between particular groups at NIH which you are aware of? (e.g., patients and staff in CC or researchers and support)

14. Do you feel that the level of conflict in your Institute or Division is typical of NIH in general?

15. Have you worked at other government agencies? (If yes) Do you think that NIH in general has unique types of conflict or ones typical of most government agencies? If unique, in what way?

16. What characterizes persons at NIH you find hard to work with? (Focus on either supervisors or corworkers whichever were not emphasized under conflict items.)

17. What characterizes persons at NIH you find easy to work with? (Focus on either supervisors or coworkers whichever were not emphasized under cooperation items.)

APPENDIX B
Conflict and Cooperation Survey Items

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT (Alpha = .74*)

1. In general, the current level of conflict which exists in my work-setting is low – high.	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high
2. How often does conflict interfere with getting your work done?	1 never	2 rarely	3 sometimes	4 often	5 very often
3. How often have you personally had work conflicts?	1 never	2 rarely	3 sometimes	4 often	5 very often

CONFLICT DEFINITIONS

CONFLICT can be defined in many different ways. Listed below are six possible definitions. Please circle the number of the definition which best represents how you personally view CONFLICT. While you may feel that more than one definition is appropriate, it is important that you select only the one best definition. In selecting a specific definition, it may help you to think of examples of CONFLICT you are familiar with.

CONFLICT IS . . . (Choose one)

1. A disagreement or difference of opinion between person or groups.
2. A break-down in or absence of communication between persons or groups.
3. Competition for resources, recognition, etc., between persons or groups.
4. Persons or groups hindering one another from achieving goals or objectives.
5. A disagreement in ways of getting things done between persons or groups.
6. Unequal treatment of different persons or groups.

COOPERATION DEFINITIONS

COOPERATION can also be defined in many different ways. Listed below are six possible definitions. Please circle the number of the definition which best represents how you personally view COOPERATION. Again, while you may feel that more than one definition is appropriate, it is important that you select only the one best definition. It may help you to think of examples of COOPERATION you are familiar with.

COOPERATION IS . . . (Choose one)

1. An agreement or same opinion between persons or groups.
2. Open, candid communications between persons or groups.
3. Sharing of resources, recognition, etc., between persons or groups.
4. Persons or groups helping one another to achieve goals or objectives.
5. An agreement in ways of getting things done between persons or groups.
6. Equal treatment of different persons or groups.

*Alpha refers to internal consistency among items within this dimension.

CONTRIBUTORS TO CONFLICT

	Not at all	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
1. In general, to what extent do your co-workers contribute to *conflict* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
2. In general, to what extent does your supervisor contribute to *conflict* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
3. In general, to what extent does the way persons communicate or share information contribute to *conflict* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
4. In general, to what extent does unequal treatment of persons by other employees or supervisors contribute to *conflict* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
5. In general, to what extent does the way employees perform their jobs contribute to *conflict* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5

CONTRIBUTORS TO COOPERATION

	Not at all	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
1. In general, to what extent do your co-workers contribute to *cooperation* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
2. In general, to what extent does your supervisor contribute to *cooperation* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
3. In general, to what extent does the way persons communicate or share information contribute to *cooperation* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
4. In general, to what extent does *equal* treatment of persons by other employees or supervisors contribute to *cooperation* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5
5. In general, to what extent does the way employees perform their jobs contribute to *cooperation* in your work-setting?	1	2	3	4	5

CONFLICT BEHAVIORS (Alpha = .91)

HOW OFTEN SOMEONE ...	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Very Often
1. insults or makes demeaning comments about another person.	1	2	3	4	5
2. hinders the advancement of another person.	1	2	3	4	5
3. removes work duties and resources from another person.	1	2	3	4	5
4. sexually harasses another person.	1	2	3	4	5
5. assigns too much or inappropriate work to another person.	1	2	3	4	5
6. hinders another person's attempts to use the grievance, appeals, or EEO procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
7. physically threatens or harasses another person.	1	2	3	4	5
8. withholds support or information necessary to perform the job from another person.	1	2	3	4	5
9. hinders another person's attempts to pursue educational opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
10. slanders or spreads rumors about another person.	1	2	3	4	5

RACE AND SEX DISCRIMINATION (Alpha = .60)

	Much Worse	Worse	About the Same	Better	Much Better
1. Compared to male employees, *female employees* are treated: (worse – better)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Compared to other employees, *minority employees* are treated: (worse – better)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Compared to males, promotion opportunities for *females* are: (worse – better)	1	2	3	4	5
4. Compared to non-minorities, promotion opportunities for *minorities* are: (worse – better)	1	2	3	4	5

CONFLICT OUTCOMES (Alpha = .86)

THE IMPACT WHICH CONFLICT HAS HAD ON MY JOB:

1.	1 I am much less productive	2 I am somewhat less productive	3 No impact	4 I am somewhat more productive	5 I am much more productive
2.	1 Communications in my work group are much worse	2 Communications in my work group are somewhat worse	3 No impact	4 Communications in my work group are somewhat better	5 Communications in my work group are much better
3.	1 I have greatly reduced job satisfaction	2 I have somewhat reduced job satisfaction	3 No impact	4 I have somewhat increased job satisfaction	5 I have greatly increased job satisfaction
4.	1 I am much more closely supervised	2 I am somewhat more closely supervised	3 No impact	4 I am somewhat less closely supervised	5 I am much less closely supervised
5.	1 I have much worse relations with coworkers	2 I have somewhat worse relations with coworkers	3 No impact	4 I have somewhat better relations with coworkers	5 I have much better relations with coworkers
6.	1 I exert much less effort or spend less time at work	2 I exert somewhat less effort or spend less time at work	3 No impact	4 I exert somewhat more effort or spend more time at work	5 I exert much more effort or spend more time at work
7.	1 I have much worse relations with my supervisor	2 I have somewhat worse relations with my supervisor	3 No impact	4 I have somewhat better relations with my supervisor	5 I have much better relations with my supervisor
8.	1 I am much more tense	2 I am somewhat more tense	3 No impact	4 I am somewhat less tense	5 I am much less tense

SUPERVISORY CONFLICT RESOLUTION (Alpha = .85)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My supervisor helps to resolve conflicts that occur in my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When a conflict occurs between two people in my work group my supervisor listens to both sides of the story.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My supervisor attempts to resolve conflicts in private with the person involved.	1	2	3	4	5

SUPERVISORY DISCRIMINATION (Alpha = .82)

PLEASE INDICATE *THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU FEEL* YOUR SUPERVISOR . . .

	Not at all	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent	I do not know
1. discriminates on the basis of sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. discriminates on the basis of race.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. discriminates against the handicapped.	1	2	3	4	5	6

CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

1. The impact which filing an EEO complaint has on conflict:

1	2	3	4	5
Considerably reduces conflict	Somewhat reduces conflict	No impact	Somewhat increases conflict	Considerably increases conflict

2. The impact which filing a grievance has on conflict:

1	2	3	4	5
Considerably reduces conflict	Somewhat reduces conflict	No impact	Somewhat increases conflict	Considerably increases conflict

3. The impact which going to the employee assistance program has on conflict:

1	2	3	4	5
Considerably reduces conflict	Somewhat reduces conflict	No impact	Somewhat increases conflict	Considerably increases conflict

4. The impact which going to personnel has on conflict:

1	2	3	4	5
Considerably reduces conflict	Somewhat reduces conflict	No impact	Somewhat increases conflict	Considerably increases conflict

5. I have received training which has helped me to resolve conflict more effectively.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. How often have you used a trained neutral third party to resolve conflict in your work group?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often

USE OF DISCUSSIONS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

1. How often have you had a conflict which was resolved through discussions held within your work-setting?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often

2. When you have a conflict with someone, how often do you attempt to resolve it by initiating discussions with that person?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often

3. I find that discussing a conflict I am having with other persons directly involved generally has the following impact.

1	2	3	4	5
Greatly increases the conflict	Somewhat increases the conflict	No effect	Somewhat reduces the conflict	Greatly reduces the conflict

APPENDIX C

Conflict Issues for One or More Job Categories

1. Unequal treatment
2. Awareness of physical harassment
3. Awareness of supervisory harassment
4. Awareness of co-worker harassment
5. Support staff treated worse than MDs and PhDs
6. Lack of supervisory discussion of career development
7. Performance and promotions unrelated
8. Training requested but not received
9. Job-related information received too late
10. Extra work doesn't get credit
11. Jobs improperly classified
12. No chance for promotion in current job series
13. Cannot transfer to another job series
14. Insulting or demeaning comments
15. Someone hindering the advancement of another

APPENDIX D

Conflict Behaviors

HOW OFTEN SOMEONE . . .

1. insults or makes demeaning comments about another person.
2. hinders the advancement of another person.
3. removes work duties and resources from another person.
4. sexually harasses another person.
5. assigns too much or inappropriate work to another person.
6. hinders another person's attempt to use the grievance, appeals, or EEO procedures.
7. physically threatens or harasses another person.
8. withholds support or information necessary to perform the job from another person.
9. hinders another person's attempts to pursue educational opportunities.
10. slanders or spreads rumors about another person.

Step-wise Regressions for Predicting Work-Setting Conflict Level

Job Category	Regression Step Number	Conflict Behavior Predictors	beta	Multiple R	F Value
1 – Research (N = 408)	1	Withholds support (Item #8)	.37	.37	64.98 **
	2	Insults or makes demeaning comments (Item #1)	.24	.43	24.55 **
2 – Support (N = 213)	1	Hinders advancement (Item #2)	.31	.31	23.22 **
	2	Assigns too much or inappropriate work (Item #5)	.18	.35	5.43 *
3 – Administration (N = 344)	1	Insults or makes demeaning comments (Item #1)	.41	.41	67.91 **
	2	Hinders educational opportunities (Item #9)	.20	.45	15.03 **
4 – Maintenance (N = 133)	1	Hinders attempts to use grievance, appeals, or EEO procedures (Item #5)	.40	.40	24.60 **
	2	Hinders advancement (Item #2)	.23	.44	5.60 *

**p<.01
*p<.05

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WPT-7

To help OPM evaluate this publication, please complete and return this form. Thank you.

1. What is your general reaction to this publication?
   _____ Excellent _____ Above Average _____ Average _____ Poor

2. What are the publication's strong points?

3. In what ways could this publication be made more useful? (e.g., what type of other information on this subject would you like to have had?)

4. How did you learn about this publication? (Check as many as appropriate.)

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   - ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

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b. No. of employees who report to you:
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